

AUGUST 6, 1976

THE SITUATION IN LEBANON

ANNCR: VOA NEWS ANALYST RONALD J. DUNLAVEY DISCUSSES AMERICAN VIEWS ON THE LEBANESE CIVIL WAR --- AND ITS IMPACT ON MIDDLE EAST PEACE EFFORTS:

VOICE: THE UNITED STATES HAS MAINTAINED A CONCERNED BUT LOW-KEYED ATTITUDE TOWARD DEVELOPMENTS IN LEBANON. THE OFFICIAL POSITION REMAINS AS STATED SEVERAL TIMES BY SECRETARY OF STATE HENRY KISSINGER. WASHINGTON WOULD LIKE TO SEE A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT OF LEBANESE INTERNAL DIFFICULTIES BY THE LEBANESE PARTIES THEMSELVES. "THE UNITED STATES," SAID MR. KISSINGER ON JULY TWENTY-SECOND, "HAS ALWAYS BELIEVED THAT THE OUTCOME IN LEBANON SHOULD BE ONE IN WHICH THE TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF LEBANON IS PRESERVED, AND IN WHICH THE TWO COMMUNITIES, THE CHRISTIAN AND THE MUSLIM, CAN EXIST SIDE BY SIDE."

WASHINGTON WOULD LIKE TO SEE A LEBANESE SETTLEMENT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE FOR TWO REASONS. FIRST, BECAUSE IT BELIEVES--- ALONG WITH THE REST OF THE WORLD---THAT IT WOULD BE TRAGIC FOR THE PEOPLE OF LEBANON IF THE DESTRUCTIVE CIVIL WAR WERE TO CONTINUE. AND SECOND BECAUSE THE LEBANESE CONFLICT HAS STALLED EFFORTS TO REACH A BROADER MIDDLE EAST SETTLEMENT BETWEEN ISRAEL AND THE ARAB NATIONS. TO QUOTE SECRETARY KISSINGER AGAIN: "UNTIL THE PROBLEM OF LEBANON IS RESOLVED, THE ARAB COUNTRIES WILL BE PREOCCUPIED WITH THAT PROBLEM, AND IT WILL BE VERY DIFFICULT TO MAKE SERIOUS PROGRESS TOWARD A SOLUTION OF THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT." THIS SAME CONCERN WAS EXPRESSED LAST WEEK BY A SENATE COMMITTEE WHICH HAD JUST COMPLETED EXTENSIVE HEARINGS ON THE MIDDLE EAST. THE SENIOR MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE---DEMOCRAT GEORGE MCGOVERN AND REPUBLICAN

CHARLES PERCY---WOULD LIKE TO SEE THE UNITED STATES UNDERTAKE TO RENEW NEGOTIATING MOMENTUM AS SOON AS POSSIBLE AFTER THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION, REGARDLESS OF WHO IS ELECTED. THE LEBANESE CONFLICT, HOWEVER, REMAINS A ROADBLOCK.

IT IS RECOGNIZED THAT THE EVENTS IN LEBANON HAVE ALTERED SOME FACTORS IN POTENTIAL MIDDLE EAST PEACE EQUATIONS. THE SITUATION IS BY NO MEANS WHAT IT WAS. SYRIA, LEBANON, ISRAEL, EGYPT, THE PALESTINE LIBERATION ORGANIZATION---THEIR ROLES AND THEIR RELATIONS WITH EACH OTHER HAVE CHANGED AS A RESULT OF THE COMPLEX NATURE OF THE LEBANESE CONFLICT. THE REARRANGEMENT OF THOSE ROLES AND RELATIONS MAY HAVE A SIGNIFICANT EFFECT ON RENEWED EFFORTS TO WORK OUT A BROAD PATTERN OF PEACE FOR THE MIDDLE EAST. BUT IN ANY EVENT, ARAB-ISRAELI PEACE NEGOTIATIONS CANNOT REMAIN SIDE-TRACKED INDEFINITELY, AND THE URGENT NEED FOR THEIR RENEWAL IS ONE OF THE MAIN REASONS FOR HOPING THAT A SETTLEMENT OF THE LEBANESE CONFLICT WILL NOT BE DELAYED MUCH LONGER.